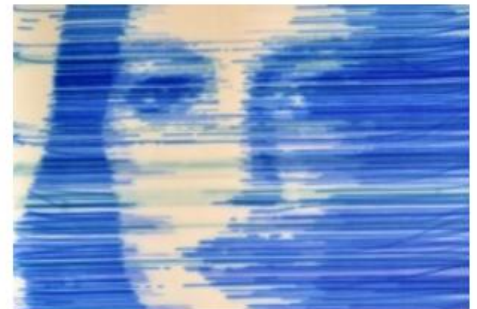
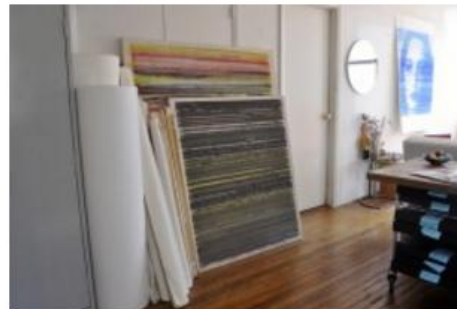


MIXED MEDIUM: ANTON PERICH

Words by Justin Fulton.

There are two types of artists — Those who become household names with subsequent empires and those who produce work happily within the margins of all that shimmers, gaining validation through spearheading their own revolution and accumulating the respect of the informed in-crowd. It's the latter whose often great cultural contributions are little-known to younger generations, and Anton Perich is no exception to this rule. In the 1970's one could catch the artist-inventor musing the likes of Grace Jones, Neke Carson and Robert Mapplethorpe or hosting parties at Warhol's factory on Union Square West, which later became his home. In a time

before 'iCulture', and digital-erased analog, when the pulse of the city could be found beating in the galleries and THE place to be was Max's Kansas City (Oh EVERYONE dined at Max's darling!), Anton invented the paint machine – which is believed to be a precursor to the inkjet printer – and foreshadowed reality television with notorious broadcasts on the New York public access channel. The press compared it to Armageddon, and they were right. For Anton tarnished the pristine patina of prime-time television with these programs. He's also highly regarded for his nightlife photography, still sought after to this day by collectors for its preservation of the golden



era we all wish we were part of.

JUSTIN FULTON: So where does your story begin?

ANTON PERICH: I grew up in communist Yugoslavia. When I was 20 I went to France to study painting in Paris. I was painting and writing poetry during the avant-garde movement known as Lettrism. I was in France in the late 60's during the revolution, which some don't take seriously. While it was mostly a quiet revolution, France really wasn't the best place to be. Just having long hair or wild fashions could get you arrested. We would be held for six hours maximum and for nothing really [laughs]. So New York was the place I was interested in mainly for the art coming out of it at the time. When I came to New York, I liked the pop scene and got confused about my own work. I stopped painting for a while and started shooting.

JF: Why did this confusion come into play?

AP: I didn't think I had anything to contribute to painting at this point. I started getting into video art, taking pictures of the screen and blowing them up. Then I got the idea to build my paint machine to bring the electric brush stroke into art. For me that was enough to get excited about something again. My contribution was bringing Morse code into art. Entire paintings based on line and exploring it. It really predicted the future of photography, saying it will be digital. Warhol was hilarious. He said he was jealous of my machine. A man of such magnitude and he was jealous of my invention! [laughs]. I used to work for Interview magazine you know.

JF: Your photography was first featured in Interview. Where did you start shooting?

AP: When I first came to New York I got a still camera and went shooting every night. The only place to go was Max's Kansas City and everyone was there, especially in the back room. They weren't celebrities to me, but people I met who became friends. I later moved on to Studio 54.



JF: Lou Reed, Patti Smith and John Waters...Some friends you have [laughs]...

AP: Every night it was the same crowd and people thought I was shooting with no film in my camera since I didn't release a lot of them for years. I took so many pictures that I decided to start my own magazine. Night magazine was like the Facebook of the time, because everyone was in it.



JF: What about your public access television shows?

AP: I was the first to make an underground show. The content was downtown with lots of improvised soap operas. I featured my friends like Taylor Mead taking off



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his clothes and going crazy, and Candy Darling, Holly Woodlawn and Andrea Feldman. [They were] Gay, straight and neurotic right on cable TV. In 1973 it really caused a big scandal. I changed television. Artists at the time didn't touch television. There were of course video artists, but only in the galleries which were safe, bourgeois spaces. Television was so beautiful and clean and that was my target. I brought gay people right into the living rooms of New York [laughs]. I was also working with Susan Blond and Couri Hay. They did a lot of interviews on the social scene, causing a stir by having socialites say a dirty word on camera.

JF: I can only imagine a lot of it coming off as porn to some viewers flipping through the channels or parents finding out what their children were watching...

AP: Oh yes, my work was called pornographic, but it wasn't. It was low quality therefore confused with porn. It was important for me to change the way people thought of television and I enjoyed it very much.

JF: But it wasn't all cocks and crazies, did you not get innovative with fashion?

AP: I was the first to broadcast hour long fashion shows. Back then you only saw small clips of shows on television and now there's entire channels devoted to it. I did Kenzo, Issey Miyake, Scott Barry and Halston to name some. It was incredible!

JF: I've coveted your series of Andrea photograms. How would you say your art has evolved?

AP: I have been working with flowers and exploring negative space. My recent paintings are very primitive and influenced by stained glass windows.

JF: Obviously a lot has changed since the 1970's, especially with the rise of digital. Is there a magic in analog that you feel is now lost in art?

AP: I think it's about finding ways to compensate for any lost romanticism by corrupting modern technology with mistakes. Even my machine makes mistakes. I love when something goes wrong and it become part of the picture.

